

Little, Paul E. *How to Give Away Your Faith*, rev. ed. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988. 192 pp. \$13.00.

The title of Paul Little's book aptly expresses its overarching theme—how to do personal evangelism. In this readily accessible, convicting, insightful work, Little combines instruction from the Bible and proven lessons from his and other believers' witnessing experiences to help Christians share the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Though *How to Give Away Your Faith* has less scriptural meat than most of the other evangelism books¹ I have read, his practical pointers on various aspects of the subject are invaluable. Leighton Ford is correct; Little is not “an armchair strategist. He is a veteran of many encounters in personal and group evangelism.”² Some believers *know* the tools of the “trade” quite well. Yet, they are inept at *using* them to build the kingdom of God. What general characteristics of the world and the corresponding needs of the human beings who inhabit it should Christians keep in mind as they evangelize? What must Christians know in order to faithfully proclaim Christ? How are Christians to live with and relate to pagans in order to be effective ambassadors for Christ? What implications for us today can be drawn from the Lord's encounters with unbelievers? Why do Christians believe what we know all persons ought to believe? Little, with the help of his widow's later contributions³ to the book, provides timely

¹*Evangelism Explosion* by D. James Kennedy, *Today's Gospel: Authentic or Synthetic?* by Walt Chantry, *Today's Evangelism: Its Message and Methods* by Ernest C. Reisinger, *The Soul Winner* by Charles Spurgeon, *Tell the Truth: The Whole Gospel to the Whole Person by Whole People* by Will Metzger

²Back cover of book

³Marie Little later added material from her late husband's lectures to the original 1966 edition of *How to Give Away Your Faith*.

answers to these and other important questions. The last few chapters (part of seven and eight through ten) of *How to Give Away Your Faith* contain material that *seems* more fitting for a systematic theology text or a Christian living manual. But, upon further reflection, living for God naturally entails evangelism and the need to know broad truths for societal interaction⁴ that glorifies Him. A dear brother of the church that I formerly attended once said during a Sunday school lesson that Christians must preach the gospel to themselves every day, lest we forget the basis of our communion with God. Little's ninth and tenth chapters encourage this practice.

I liked many aspects of *How to Give Away Your Faith*. The captivating stories from his own life help undergird his theories. They also make the book much more enjoyable to read, compared to a work which only provides raw exegesis of biblical passages that pertain to evangelism. I, thankfully, like many of my brothers and sisters in Christ, am a Calvinist.⁵ For various reasons we can sometimes be a little rough around the edges. I appreciate Little's emphasis on the Christian's need to be sensitive and winsome at all times. Writing about unbelievers, he says, "We must try to understand what and how they think, how they feel, what they aspire to be and do" (20). Pagans are not persons with a programming glitch. They are pitiful sinners in desperate need of Yahweh's grace.

A book on evangelism that does not address apologetics is a failure. In chapter six of Little's work, you see that he recognizes the inherent relationship between evangelism and apologetics; they are integral parts of each other. I have often said to my own students, You cannot be a faithful evangelist if you are not a faithful apologist. "Unless we are fully persuaded

⁴Little's chapter on worldliness wherein he expounds Romans 14 and a bit of 1 Corinthians 8-10 was especially helpful.

⁵I only use this term because it succinctly describes my soteriological position.

in our own minds that Jesus Christ is the truth, we will never effectively communicate the gospel to someone else” (104). Soldiers without the right weapons seldom engage the enemy. Though some of them are flawed, I also like the wide range of apologetic arguments that Little offers in such a short amount of space.

Throughout Little’s book, readers are explicitly and implicitly told that Christians are always, everywhere witnessing about God. It is unavoidable. “Witnessing goes far beyond what we say at inspired moments. It involves all that we are and do. It’s a way of life, the ‘art’ of explaining to someone who Jesus is and why trusting him as Lord and Savior is the best news in the world” (36). This nicely summarizes my philosophy of evangelism.

Christians, including seminarians, can be some of the weirdest folk. “Jesus did not call us to be oddballs” (53). Yes, Christians are called to be different in many ways. We will indeed stick out like sore thumbs in today’s God-hating culture. But we are not permitted to enhance our peculiarity by being obtuse social boars. Little suggests several simple ways to help Christians improve their “relateability” to others.

1. Establish good eye contact (43).
2. Develop good listening skills (43).
3. Foster an attitude of encouragement (43).
4. Make yourself interesting to others (43).
5. Avoid ethical scruples if possible (chapter 8).
6. Avoid Christianese (82-83).

I am thankful for *How to Give Away Your Faith*. I profited from it, and I will recommend it to *some* fellow Christians. For the discerning, more mature believer, it is helpful. I cannot, however, recommend it to every Christian for it contains or is built upon significant theological and philosophical errors. I have not given all the reasons I like Little’s book. Nor will I discuss all of its problems. Several statements lead me to believe that Little espouses an antibiblical view of natural man. He refers to the lost as “seekers” (23). The apostle Paul clearly

teaches there is no God-seeker. Little writes about the Holy Spirit bending their [unbelievers] wills until they receive Jesus Christ (47). God never “bends” a lost man’s will. No, He gives them a new will, thereby enabling them to receive Jesus Christ. Little claims unbelievers are on a “spiritual journey” (55). Unredeemed sinners are not on a spiritual journey. They are dead in their trespasses and sins. Yes, man is incurably religious and is always worshipping something, but the above term is problematic. It breeds confusion about man’s natural condition. All sinners are on a journey, so to speak, and all sinners are seeking something. But let us not call it a “spiritual journey” as if to suggest they are moving toward the Spirit of God. No unbeliever is “on the way” (69) to Jesus. Sinners either love Jesus or hate Jesus. “On the way” also suggests that works play a part in getting to Him. The first quotation and subsequent paragraph on page seventy blurs the God-ordained antithesis between belief and unbelief. Lastly, God is very offensive to natural man. If a Christian gives a clear presentation about God to a pagan, in whom the spirit of God is not working, the pagan will consider the Christian and God to be “an affront” (79).

“It’s that sure knowledge that the Christian message is the greatest gift we can give because of what Jesus Christ has meant in our own lives” (38). This statement relegates the objective grandeur of the gospel to existentialism. The Christian message is the greatest gift we can give to sinners because it is the only means by which sinners may be redeemed, thereby enabling them to do the thing for which they were created—worship God.

The third full paragraph on page 111 is riddled with egregious error. Matthew 7:7-11 and Jeremiah 29:13 can in no way be used to deduce the belief that God will give an unbeliever the “chance” to hear the gospel if he or she responds “to the light they have and seek God.” At least six more theological and philosophical errors are committed on pages 87, 92, 111, 118, 125, and 131. “Should the question [of whether the Bible is the Word of God] come up, it usually is

enough to show that the Bible is a reliable historical document and on this basis confront the person with the claims of Christ” (87). A nonsequitur is committed here. The textual tradition of Plato’s writings is historically reliable. Does this mean that we should then believe man’s soul is eternal? Of course not. Christians are never permitted to utilize fallacious arguments. “This single, inarguable fact [Jesus’ resurrection] is the supreme validation of his deity” (92). The physical resurrection of Jesus Christ is hardly “inarguable.” And the question that it begs is whether or not the source of that belief—the Bible—is credible. Also, one’s resurrection does not guarantee one’s deity. Lazarus rose from the dead. Is he divine? A naturalist can easily believe Jesus rose from the dead without concluding that He is God.

I learned, rather relearned, three lessons from *How to Give Away Your Faith*. I need to listen to unbelievers more attentively (page 21). Asking good questions to unbelievers is an excellent way to learn about them *and* educate them (page 54). To ensure the main points of the gospel are explained, I should always keep a basic outline of it in my head (pages 95-97).

I would like to discuss the following items in class. “People have a right to believe anything they choose to believe, but they don’t have the right to redefine Christianity” (69). I have often heard people state the first clause when discussing theology or politics. What is meant by “right”? Would God agree that His creatures, saved or lost, have the right to believe whatever they want about Him? On page 109, Little writes about the questions that non-Christians most frequently ask. If you, Dr. Beougher, were to make a list of the most frequently asked questions posed by unbelievers as you evangelized them, which would be on that list? On page 184, Little writes, “God reveals his will to us progressively, according to our obedience.” What do you, Dr. Beougher, think of this statement? Do you agree? Why or why not?